

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXIX No. 11 & 12 NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 1989



Declaration of principles

**We believe that wild birds represent an irreplaceable asset to humanity
for the following reasons:**

Having always aesthetically inspired and enchanted man, birds have not only influenced many cultures in the past but have now become important for recreational pursuits in all continents, resulting in an ever-increasing membership of organisations specially devoted to their study and conservation.

Birds play a major role as sensitive biological indicators of the status of natural ecosystems, giving early warning of environmental changes that might ultimately also be harmful to people.

Birds fulfil an essential and major ecological function in helping to maintain natural processes, including the control of many pest animals.

Birds have actual and potential significance as a direct or indirect economic resource.

Birds are of great value for a number of scientific disciplines and contribute considerably to the understanding of important ecological functions and processes in the environment, as well as to our knowledge of biology.

Because of large special interest groups focused on them, birds are of particular value in environmental education and promoting conservation.

In view of these manifold values we believe that it is of the utmost importance to work not only at national but at regional and international levels for the conservation, management and wise utilisation of birds and their habitats. In this spirit we must cooperate with each other as members of ICBP, and also with other bodies concerned with and responsible for the well-being of wild birds. The overall aim of this work is:

**To maintain the diversity, distribution, abundance and natural habitats of bird species
throughout the world and to prevent the extinction of any species or subspecies.**

In pursuing this aim we have adopted the precepts of the World Conservation Strategy and its three principles of maintaining ecological processes, preserving genetic diversity and utilising natural resources at a sustainable level. We seek to provide leadership in the implementation and promotion of effective bird conservation throughout the world.

In order to achieve our mission we work towards the following objectives for the conservation of wild birds and their habitats:

to develop a worldwide network of organisations and individuals to operate at local, national, regional and international levels;

to collect information on and to monitor the status of susceptible bird populations worldwide;

to promote increased awareness of the special importance and value of birds and their problems;

to foster international cooperation between different countries and to induce the provision of financial and technical assistance to countries where local expertise and funds are scarce;

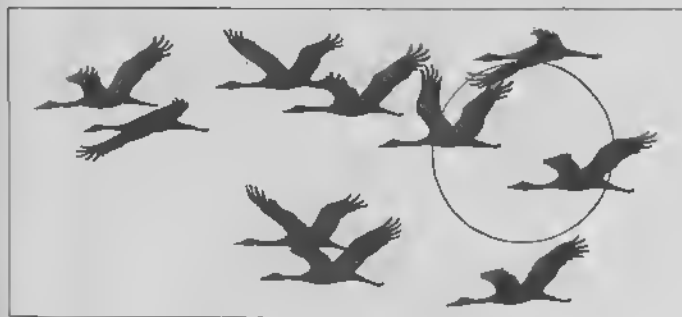
to provide independent advice and recommendations on regional and international issues;

to develop and implement selected field projects on identified regional and international priorities to save species and habitats.

FRONT COVER:

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* specialises in adeptly hovering over water courses to locate fish and plummet headlong into the water; but with water courses increasingly becoming unclear it is in trouble. The nest is a horizontal tunnel in the precipitous mudbank of a river or tank, excavated by the birds. Nest digging, incubation and care of young are shared by both the parents.

Photo S. Sridhar



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EDITORIAL

30th Birthday

We will soon be celebrating our thirtieth birthday, and one of the suggestions received from Dr. Joseph George and several others, as you will see from their letter in the correspondence section, is to have a scientific section in the Newsletter. I am sure that our readers will agree that this will be a useful development and I do hope that the scientific notes will be a useful addition to ornithological literature in this country.

PITTA – Bulletin of the Birdwatcher's Society of Andhra Pradesh

I am sure many of our readers are familiar with this Bulletin or should be as it carries interesting material. I quote from a note in the October issue reproduced from E.H. Aitken in 'A Naturalist on the Prowl'.

"Not long ago I was encamped near the sea, and every morning I saw a pair of Kestrels performing the most wonderful evolutions on the beach. They were not hovering high in the air, after the manner of their kind, scanning the ground for some creeping mouse or crouching lark, but flew very low, doubling often and darting about, as if in pursuit of some nimble prey. It took me some time to believe that they were after sand crabs. They did not make a large bag, for they were new to the work and did not set about it in the right way. But if they had kept at it, they would have improved by practice. Then, if they had trained their young to the same pursuit the young would have beaten the parents. In a few generations the structure would have followed the habits, for those parts of the body which are not kept up by constant use soon become unfit, while those parts employed in any peculiar way adapt to their new task. We may find illustrations of this law everywhere. Tame ducks can scarcely fly a yard but their legs are stouter than those of wild ducks. Darwin says that the very bones of the legs of the tame ducks are proportionally heavier, but the wing bones are lighter. So the claws of the Kestrel would have lost their keenness, his beak would have changed its shape, his legs and toes would have grown longer, and we should have had a very interesting new species of bird, the Crab-Hawk."

A Checklist of the Birds of Andhra Pradesh

Siraj A. Taher and Aasheesh Pittie have produced a checklist of the birds of Andhra Pradesh which will prove useful to birders in that area. A useful list of references has been given and 495 bird species have been listed. In the

introduction the authors say : "Andhra Pradesh is one of the leading agricultural States of India and since bird-life has a great importance in relation to agriculture, there is great need to undertake serious agro-ornithological studies. One of the prerequisites for any ecological or biological studies is to know the flora, fauna and avifauna of the particular area. With these ideas in mind, we felt the necessity of embarking upon the project of compiling a checklist of the avifauna of Andhra Pradesh. It was also felt that such a list would be useful to ecologists, field-biologists, as well as to large number of students of ornithology and amateur birdwatchers interested in the birds of this region, by providing the most basic information on this subject."

This effort was started in 1983, so it has taken nearly six years to be completed and it appears to be the first of its kind for the State of Andhra Pradesh. Some of our readers may like to procure this by writing to Siraj A. Taher, Banjara Hills, Road No.1, Hyderabad 500 034.

Incidentally, Mr. Sudhakar Marathe, Department of English, University of Hyderabad, Gachi Bowli, Hyderabad 500 134, has sent an interesting note about the birds sighted in the University campus. 81 species have been recorded, and I am sure that the author will be glad to send xerox copies of this to those who ask for it on payment of the xeroxing and postage charges. Two species – the Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* and the Blackwinged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* – have not been seen for the last few years, and I hope it is only a case of temporary absence.

A Pocket Book of Indian Pheasants

The Wildlife Institute of India, P.O. Forest, Dehra Dun 248 006, have produced this book of pheasants which deals with the 27 species found in India out of the 48 species recognised in the world. The Red Data Book lists 3 Indian species of pheasants in danger in our country. Obviously conservation steps need to be taken, and this pocket book should arouse the right kind of interest in this splendid group of birds. The book consists of 36 pages with 16 full-colour plates, and is priced at Rs.18/-.

Birding : An Introduction to Ornithological Delights for Blind and Physically Handicapped Individuals

The Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology has produced several cassettes of the sounds made by common birds, frogs, insects and mammals of Eastern United States and Canada. Sounds of approximately 70 species have been presented together with a mixed chorus of woodland birds (Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, Pileated Woodpecker, American Crow). There are highlights of the Canada Goose, calls and flight sounds of the Common Loon – duetting pair and so on. This must be a great asset to the blind and other handicapped people. But of course they would also be a source of great pleasure and education for normal birdwatchers. An increasing number of birdwatchers in India who now have recording equipment, must attempt something similar for our country. More information about this can be had from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 1291 Taylor Street NW, Washington DC 20542.

THE GREATER ADJUTANT STORK

ASAD R. RAHMANI, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Bombay 400 023

Storks are some of the largest birds in the world. The Greater Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos dubius* provides another example to the axiom that bigger animals face more dangers to their survival than the smaller species mainly because bigger animals need more space to live. With a height of 130 to 150cm, the Greater Adjutant Stork (hereafter called 'Adjutant' in this article) is a tall bird. It is slaty-black, grey and white, with nearly bald head and neck and a massive wedge-shaped bill. A large naked, pinkish pouch 25-30 cm long hangs from the front of the neck. It was named 'adjutant' by British ornithologists because its deliberate, measured gait reminded them of military adjutants who walk in similar manner. It is mainly a carrion eater and sometimes eat quite large bones, hence its

Assamese and Bengali name 'Hargilla' or 'bone-swallower'.

The overall distribution of the Adjutant extends from northwest India (Gujarat and Rajasthan) to Vietnam and possibly up to Borneo although some ornithologists now consider Borneo record as an error, referring instead to Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*. In our country it was seen in Gujarat, Rajasthan, the Gangetic plains, the northeast and sporadically in central India. There was no record from Tamil Nadu or Kerala. However, William Harvey of the British Council wrote to me that he saw eight Adjutants on 21 December 1980 on the backwaters at Mahabalipuram near Madras. This is a range extension of this species in south India.

Although ringing data are not available, the Adjutant is supposed to be nomadic, moving to the plains of India during monsoons from its main breeding grounds in the northeast India and Burma. It is found in jheels, marshes, paddyfields and drying puddles. Its main food is carrion, fish, frogs, reptiles, insects and dead or dying birds, or any small animal matter which comes within the range of its massive bill. Its African cousin, the Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* has been reported to be very destructive to flamingo colonies.

Owing to its proclivity to eat carrion, the Adjutant is considered unclean and thus generally not shot for food. It is even tolerated by local people and even now, in the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam, it can be found inside towns. In spite of this fact, there has been a drastic decline in the number of Adjutants. Fifty to sixty years ago, it was not an uncommon bird in the north and northeast of India. Vast numbers were seen on the garbage dumps outside Calcutta and other towns. It played an important role in keeping the environment clean. With improvement of sanitary conditions and urbanization, it disappeared from Calcutta. However, we cannot explain its disappearance from rural areas where sanitary conditions have not improved and may even have deteriorated much to the advantage of this species. The population of livestock has gone up and thus there are more carcasses to feed on. Studies by my colleagues in the Bombay Natural History Society indicate that the population of Whitebacked and Longbilled vultures have increased due to the increase in food supply. Similarly, the Marabou Stork of Africa, which is ecologically similar to the Adjutant, is increasing and is commonly seen on garbage dumps around towns and villages and like in our country, tolerated by Africans.

My own surveys and the information collected from fellow ornithologists, show that all over its distributional range the Adjutant has become rare. As far as I know there is no recent record from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. Only in Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan, some Greater Adjutants are regularly seen during summer months but every year less and less come. In 1983, Dr. Vibhu Prakash of the BNHS who did studies on the raptors of Keoladeo, saw 7 to 10 Adjutants and 150 to 200 Lesser Adjutants but in 1989 only one Greater and 3-4 Lesser Adjutants were seen. In Bihar, I saw seven in April 1988 from the main road. West Bengal where hundreds were seen earlier around towns and villages, drew a blank when my colleagues Goutam Narayan and Lima Rosalind did a roadside survey in June 1989. Only in Assam we could see some Greater Adjutants. In May 1989, we found 57 right in the middle of Tezpur town and a few more were seen earlier around a fish market in Guwahati town. Between 29 April and 9 May 1989 we

counted 80 storks in 10 spots in five districts of Assam. During this roadside count, we saw five carcasses and every carcass had a few Greater Adjutants along with vultures and kites. Inquiries from local people revealed that this species is still seen around slaughter houses and garbage dumps in many towns of Assam.

What could be the causes for the rarity of Adjutant? A literature survey revealed that there are very few nesting records of the Adjutants from our country. Nearly 100 years ago, few nests were found in Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh and a small breeding colony in the Sunderbans in West Bengal and one or two records from Orissa. In the 1960s, five to six nests were located in Kaziranga National Park in Assam. However, this does not mean that these were the only nesting areas of Adjutants in India but it indicates that even in the olden days, most of the adjutants seen in India were coming from outside. The nearest country where they were seen in large breeding colonies was Burma. Owing to paucity of data, I have not been able to chronicle the decline of the Adjutant but it is generally and rightly surmised that this decline started with the destruction of breeding colonies in Burma.

However, this could not be the only reason. Why has the resident population of the Adjutant, which was present in India, not increased (like the Marabou Stork) to fill the vacancy created by the decrease of the Burmese population? Food of Adjutant in the form carcass has not decreased, so what could be the reason for its sharp decline? The Adjutant, unlike other storks such as Blacknecked, is not very sensitive to human disturbances but still it has fared badly. I have seen Adjutants right inside Tezpur and Guwahati towns around slaughter houses or fish markets, so why should species become uncommon when it is not molested and it can get all the food it wants, thanks to our dirty sanitary habits? Is Adjutant's dependence on human beings the major reason for its fall? Is it suffering from pesticidal poisoning and is its rarity only a symptom of environmental degradation? Unless we do a detailed study on this interesting species, it is difficult to answer these questions.

Along with the Blacknecked Stork I am collecting information of the sight records of the Adjutant. Readers of 'Newsletter' are requested to contact me if they know any area where the Greater Adjutant Stork is found in good numbers. Any new or old sight record will be useful to my study. All help will be duly acknowledged. However, I want to caution the readers, that the Lesser Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos javanicus* is easily mistaken by many to be Greater Adjutant. The Lesser Adjutant is comparatively common and seen all over the country in suitable localities, especially in the northeast India.

FRUSTRATION – AND EXHILARATION

AAMIR ALI, 14 ch. de la Tourelle, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland

There is a lake in the French Alps, Lac de Voget, and I had made two attempts to get to it. It is not at all difficult, being a 3-hour climb of about 1200m from Fer a Cheval which itself is only about an hour and half's drive from Geneva. Altogether, a comfortable day's outing.

But due to bad weather, deep snow and flooded streams, my attempts had been failures. The thought of these unsuccessful outings kept nagging at me and last week I decided to exorcise the demon and have done with it. And less than an hour up, the rain set in, the fog descended and the third attempt petered out.

Feeling like a drenched and beaten rat, I wondered what I could do to salvage what was left of the day. Lower down the valley, it wasn't raining, only threatening.

A study of the map suggested I might go to another lake, the Lac du Roy, just an hour's walk above the resort of Praz de Lys. So this is what I did and the gods smiled on me.

It was a lovely little lake, meadows all round and some imposing peaks of the Prealpes around. And as it was past the holiday season, there was not a soul around; I had the lake, the meadows and the mountains to myself.

All this might have been consolation enough but the real reward was the birds. As far as I can recall, I have never had such an exciting day of birding in the mountains as this. Two first sightings and two fairly rare ones (at least, for me).

Arriving at the lake, the first thing I saw was a bird on a stump, making sallies. A Flycatcher, obviously. Not the Spotted, which is the commonest around. But it flew off before I could meditate further on its identity. A few minutes later, two of them flew on to a nearby rock allowing a longer look. Red-breasted *Muscicapa parva*, the first time I had seen one. Could it really be this? The Field Guide describes its habitat as "Usually deciduous forests; on passage also in open cultivation". Well, this was September and migration time, so yes, it could be.

And within the next two hours, I had a feast of birds. It was mostly open meadows, about 17-1800 m. in altitude, with clumps of bushes here and there, but no trees.

On one of these, there was a Citril Finch *Carduelis citrinella*, and how very much brighter its yellow chest was than of its picture in the Field Guide! And how understanding and kind he was to let me watch him for

several minutes before flying off to other duties. I had seen this bird only twice before and never so well and clearly as this time.

There were several flocks of birds here and there, flying off as I approached, displaying their snow-white rumps as they did so. Occasionally, they stopped to let me have a better look at them. Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla*. The only other time I had seen these properly was some ten years ago in our garden in Geneva. They breed in Scandinavia, but I assume the ones I saw were migrants on their way to happier climes.

And the second first sighting was an Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*. The yellow throat wasn't very visible but the streaked chest was distinctive; it must have been an immature one. It is relatively common in the Alps and is found around Geneva as well. It winters in the southern Sahara.

My victim took its place on a twig very close to the Citril Finch I was watching and, of course, caused a crisis. Which one was I to watch? I knew it would be better to concentrate on one of them but however convinced I was of this, I ended up, inevitably, switching my binoculars from one to the other like someone watching Becker vs. Lendl. The Finch and the Bunting were indulgent to an over-excited watcher and both stayed on with condescending patience for several minutes.

And while all this was going on, on the far ridge, a flock of large black birds flew around and settled on a rock, right on the edge. Though far away, they offered a clear silhouette. Occasionally two or three of them would fly off, circle and come back again. They looked enormous, but were not the right shape for raptors. Ravens, they were, *Corvus corax*, with their wedge-shaped tails. They are frequent in the Alps, but usually either alone or a couple. This was a flock of about eight, flying around and behaving like choughs.

And to round things off, there was a marmot, a large one, with its fur in the most comic situation. It was in patches of chestnut, dark grey, light grey and cream, a real motley to the view. No wonder he was skulking behind some rocks, looking very sheepish indeed.

I should have returned home cursing the rain that had once again spoilt my attempt to get to the Voget; instead I returned blessing it for having given me such a glorious day's birding.

HERONRY AT INDAPUR

DR. SATTYASHEEL NAIK, M.S., Naik Hospital, 781/782, Shukrawar Peth, Opp. Jain Mandir, Pune 411 002

Indapur is situated 140 km from Pune on the Pune Sholapur road. I had been informed by Mr. Kiran Purandare that some Grey Herons had been nesting on the trees in their office compound.

On 27th August morning I along with the members of the Indian Nature Society, Shri Sureshchandra Wargade, Mr. Deepak Shinde, Mr. Chandrashekar Acharya, Mr. Jayant Deshpande and Mr. D.V.Kumar went to Indapur. This heronry is situated in the tashil and police office compound in the old ruined fortress of Maluji Raje Bhosale. In this compound there are four big Tamrind trees, one Pipal tree and two Banyan trees. There is one more tall Tamrind tree situated in the nearby field. These trees are tall and big and are used for nesting by these birds.

There were about 20 nests in each tree. A few nests still had young birds while others were abandoned. The most predominant birds nesting were the Grey Herons. There were a total of 22 nests which still had young birds. The number of young birds varied. In some nests there was only a solitary chick while others had two to three and a few nests had up to four young birds. On an average all the young birds were about 1 1/2 feet tall indicating that most of the Grey Herons had laid their eggs at the same time. The adult Grey Herons were busy bringing in food for their young ones. The Tamrind tree in the field contained a solitary nest of a Painted Stork and a single young bird stood in the nest. On inquiring with the local police staff Mr. S.D. Jadhav who has been working here since the last two years informed us that the Painted Storks had already reared their young ones in May and June and left. At that time there were about ten pairs of Painted Storks nesting and after the Painted Storks had left the Grey Herons had arrived.

There were also two nests in which Black Ibis were incubating their eggs. There were 25 Black Ibis and some grown up chicks which were fed by their parents indicating that the eggs had been laid at different times. There was also a pair of White Ibis along with the Black Ibis. The same tree has a roost for bats. There are also a few pairs of Rose Ringed Parakeets nesting in the holes of the tree. There is also a nest of Grey Herons in the Pipal tree.

Near the heronry is a small shallow lake which is drying up. Initially the Grey Herons and Ibis would collect fish

from this small lake but at present the birds have to make longer trips to the backwaters of the Ujaini dam to collect food for their young ones.

On inquiring as to whether there was any problem from these birds to the police and tashil office, it was pointed out that the bird droppings caused a lot of mess in the compound. There was a lot of foul smell especially during the rains. There were lot of empty egg shells, sometimes eggs and sometimes small chicks which fell in the compound from the nest and died emitting a foul smell. There were lot of small and big fishes fallen all over making the campus look dirty.

Mr. Jadhav also informed us that two months ago a fairly big bird had fallen from the nest and had broken its wing and could not fly. He and his friends decided to save this bird. They got hold of a fisherman and asked him to bring some fishes for this young bird daily. This bird became so friendly that he stayed in the compound up to two months and would readily accept the food. But one day it strayed away and as he could not fly it was pecked at by crows badly and it died. He said that crows are a great menace to these nesting birds and I could also see that a lot of crows were disturbing the birds. There was also a pair of Pariah Kites which used to sweep over the nests. The crows were mainly attracted due to eggs in earlier stages, then the young chicks and then towards the fish brought in by the adult birds to feed their young ones. They would try to steal the fishes.

The reason that the heronry had recently formed is that the birds in order to nest require big trees, protection and plenty of food to rear their young ones. These trees are about 100 years old, tall and are situated in the police office compound and hence get double protection. Then again there is a small lake in the vicinity which provides food in plenty, there is also plenty of food available at the backwaters of Ujaini dam. This is the first heronry located near the Ujaini dam and its backwaters where the larger birds like Painted Storks, Grey Herons and Ibis breed. There must be many more which are yet to come to our notice. If anyone has come across similar nesting sites of such birds it would be appreciated if they communicate with me, so that such heronries can be listed up and the forest authorities can be informed so that due protection can be given to these breeding birds.

BIRDS AROUND A HOUSING COLONY AT CALICUT

S.DEVASAHAYAM and ANITA DEVASAHAYAM, L4/38 KSHB Colony, Malaparamba, Calicut 673 009

We moved into a new residence at the KSHB Colony at Malaparamba in Calicut (Kerala) during January 1987. We were fortunate in shifting to a house located at the edge of the colony surrounded by others with fairly large compounds which gave us ample scope of watching birds from our residence itself. We were soon surprised to see the variety of birds visiting our neighbourhood and felt that it would be interesting to record them. The vegetation around us was that of a typical household in North Kerala with numerous coconut, arecanut, mango, jack, banana and garden plants. Cashew, Indian almond, teak and bamboo thickets also occurred to a limited extent. Our observations were carried out through the naked eye and also by using a 7 x 35 binoculars. Whenever a bird was heard nearby it was noted. Similarly birds that flew past our neighbourhood but never settled down were also

noted. For confirming the identity of doubtful species we relied on Salim Ali's *Book of Indian Birds*, 11th edition (1979) and *Birds of Kerala*, 2nd edition, Reprint (1984). A list of birds recorded by us during the past two years (1987 and 1988) is given in Table 1.

A total of 44 species of birds were recorded by us; in addition, 8 species could not be identified with certainty. Many species (such as the Small Green Bee-eater, Roller, Spotted Dove, etc.) that were common nearby were seen very rarely probably because they are more adapted to open spaces. Thus, the classification of birds based on their occurrence (as Very Common, Common, Uncommon and Rare) is specific for our neighbourhood only. Our study showed that birdwatching can still be rewarding even if one stays in a housing colony in a bustling city such as Calicut.

TABLE 1

List of Birds recorded around a Housing Colony at Calicut

SL.NO.	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS
1	Common Pariah Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	UC
2	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>	R
3	Blue Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	R
4	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	R
5	Roseringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	C
6	Common Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus varius</i>	UC
7	Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	VC
8	Crow-Pheasant	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	VC
9	House Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	UC
10	Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	UC
11	Whitebreasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	C
12	Small Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	R
13	Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	R
14	Small Green Barbet	<i>Megalaima viridis</i>	VC
15	Goldenbacked Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	VC
16	Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>	C
17	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	UC
18	Blackheaded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	C
19	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	C
20	Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>	C
21	Ashy Swallow-Shrike	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>	R
22	Greyheaded Myna	<i>Sturnus malabaricus</i>	C
23	Blyth's Myna	<i>Sturnus malabaricus blythii</i>	R

24	Indian Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	VC
25	Tree Pie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	VC
26	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	VC
27	Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	VC
28	Blackheaded Cuckoo-Shrike	<i>Coracina melanoptera</i>	R
29	Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>	UC
30	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	UC
31	Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>	C
32	Jerdon's Chloropsis	<i>Chloropsis cochinchinensis</i>	R
33	Redvented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	VC
34	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	VC
35	Whiteheaded Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>	UC
36	Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	UC
37	Tailor Bird	<i>Ortholonus sutorius</i>	VC
38	Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	VC
39	Whitethroated Ground Thrush	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>	R
40	Purplerumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>	VC
41	Small Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia minima</i>	UC
42	Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	UC
43	Little Spider Hunter	<i>Arachnothera longirostris</i>	R
44	Yellowthroated Sparrow	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	C

Birds of Doubtful Identity

1	Collared Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>	UC
2	Ceylon Green Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>	R
3	Crimsonbreasted Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	R
4	Greybacked Shrike	<i>Lanius</i> sp.	R
5	Wren-Warbler	<i>Prinia</i> sp.	C
6	Wagtail	<i>Motacilla</i> sp.	R
7	Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum</i> sp.	R
8	Whitebacked Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>	UC

VC = Very Common

C = Common

UC = Uncommon

R = Rare

A NEW DEVICE TO MEASURE EGGS

K. SIVASUBRAMANIAM and N. GANAPATHY, National Pulses Research Centre, Vamban 622 303

Ornithologists the world over during their field trips explore the avian fauna. During such trips they have to take various measurements of the birds, eggs, etc. For this they normally use the ordinary scale. In order to measure the length of the bird, they just place the bird beside the footscale and note the measurement. But this could be more trying in case of egg measurement. For its curved end may lead to parallax error and readings may fail to give the true picture. In order to avoid this error of judgement, a simple device could be used, which a person can make for himself with cheaply available materials.

Materials Needed

1. Two footscales of good calibration.
2. Two slides each with two groove along its width with a groove width of $1/2 - 1$ cm depending on the thickness of the scales. The grooves should be cut 10 cm part. (Fig.2) One of the slides is a fixed slide with a screw on top running along its width, in order to secure it to the scale. The other slide is mobile without the screw and hence could move freely along the scale (mobile slide).

Fixing the Device

Now place the fixed slide on the two scales, such that each scale passes through one of the grooves and thus are parallel to each other. Similarly place the free moving slide away from the fixed slide. (Fig.1) Now the instrument is ready for measurement.

Measurement

Fix the fixed slide at any point on the scale, for convenience sake fix it at 5cm or 10cm. Now place the egg lengthwise in between the scales (Fig.3) and move the mobile slide towards the egg until the egg's tips touch both the slides. Now note the reading shown by the slide's inner margin and on subtracting the fixed slide reading from the mobile slide reading will give the length of egg.

For measuring the breadth place egg perpendicular to the scales, (Fig.4) but at resting position, and as before, move the mobile slide and note the measurement. That gives the breadth of the egg. Measure four or five times and calculate the average to get a statistically correct measurement.



Fig.1 A view of the fixed slide resting on the scales



Fig.2 The fixed and mobile slide



Fig.3 Ways to measure the egg

Easy to Carry

When you don't need it, unscrew the fixed slide and keep the scales and slides in a bag and go on with your journey of discovery. The scale will also in turn serve to measure the bird length, wingspan, nest width, etc.; so a two-in-one kit.

Precautions

Get a good scale. Don't use ordinary wooden scales which are often bent and won't last long. Rather buy a good opaque plastic scale and fix it using Fevicol to a wooden piece of same length and $\frac{1}{2}$ cm thick.

A slide $\frac{1}{2}$ cm thick could also be done by a carpenter and a pointed screw could be driven into the slide so that it freely moves a bit up or down but at the same time does not fall off. Draw a pointer on the inner face of both slides to denote the measurement.

The authors would welcome suggestions for improvement of the device.

TECHNICAL SECTION FOR THE NEWSLETTER.

DR. JOSEPH GEORGE, DR. S. SUBRAMANYA, M.B.KRISHNA, S. KARTHIKEYAN, T.S. SRINIVASA, A.K.RAJU, M.S. JAYANTH, U. HARISH KUMAR, J.HEMANTH and J.N. PRASAD

Congratulations! It is indeed a time to look back and feel proud to have kept the Newsletter going for thirty long years. The Newsletter has done commendable work in popularising birdwatching in India. Starting and seeing the Newsletter through these years and now in print is a great service you have done for the cause of birdwatching. It certainly would have been no easy matter and should be an inspiration and challenge not to let the third decade just slip by.

In this connection we would like to make a suggestion. We do not have in this country a scientific periodical devoted entirely to birds and field Ornithology. As it stands it is unlikely that a journal for Ornithology will be launched by any organization in India in the near future considering the prohibitive cost of paper and printing. A medium for publishing scientific work especially those involving quantification should boost work on Ornithology, particularly by the younger generation.

The Newsletter could fill this vacuum by having a new TECHNICAL SECTION beginning with the 30th volume to publish research communications on field Ornithology. The Newsletter is already being indexed as a scientific serial. If the Newsletter can publish scientific and research communications, it is sure to be accepted and treated as a journal of lasting value by scientists, ornithologists, and birdwatchers and would find a place in the libraries of Universities and other technical institutions.

Field Ornithology would readily fit into the existing scheme of things since it is a rational extension of bird watching. It would also not necessitate a change in the title of the Newsletter.

Only short communications need be envisaged for this section for the present; not full length papers. Since there are six issues of the Newsletter annually, authors would have the satisfaction of seeing their communications published without undue delay. By having a technical

section, the Newsletter would be doing a great service to Ornithology in India, and the Editor would be laying the foundations for a separate Indian scientific journal of Ornithology. When that day arrives there would be the Newsletter of popularising birdwatching and a journal of Ornithology for more painstaking investigations.

SIGHTING OF REDNECKED GREBES.

M.B. KRISHNA, 10, Ranga Rao Road, Shankarapuram, Bangalore 560 004, and DR. JOSEPH GEORGE, 189, First Cross Road, Mahalakshmi Layout, Bangalore 560 086

This is with reference to the report, in the July–August 1989 Newsletter, of the sighting of fifteen Rednecked Grebes *Podiceps griseigena* on 21st February 1989 at Pong Dam Lake in Himachal Pradesh by Mr. Sanjeeva Pandey.

This is an important sighting and amounts to a new record for India.

The Handbook mentions Rednecked Grebe as a "rare(?) winter visitor" and Ripley's Synopsis (second ed.) gives the distribution as "Northern Eurasia and North America; wintering south to North Africa, Iran, China and Japan". Cramp *et al.* (eds. 1977: The Birds of the Western Palearctic, Vol. 1, p. 90-1) point out that the species is migratory and dispersive, and does so singly or in small parties. After breeding most migrate or disperse to tidal water. According to Holmes, Roberts and Savage 1967 (JBNHS 64 : 355-7) and Savage 1968 (*ibid.* 65 : 773), there have been only two sightings in the Subcontinent on January 14, and September 24, 1967 at Nammal Lake, Punjab Salt Range, West Pakistan and a record of a bird in summer plumage near Kabul in Afghanistan on September 17, 1966. The nearest breeding area seems to be in Kazakstan and the winter quarters of the birds are as yet unrecorded in the region. The present sighting in our region is after an interval of 21 years.

Mr. Pandey's observation is therefore both interesting and important since a large number has been sighted in a new fresh water area. It is hoped that he has the opportunity to confirm his observations this winter.

BIRD SANCTUARY IN KEHIM. J.C. DANIEL, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Bombay 400 023

On the 16th of this month (October) I had the opportunity of visiting Kehim two years after the death of Dr. Salim Ali. I took advantage to discuss with officers of the RCF the manner in which Dr. Salim Ali's association with Kehim could be perpetuated. We felt that it would be most appropriate to convert the Kehim pond into a bird sanctuary to be named in due course after Dr. Salim Ali. During our visit we saw only several Pond Herons and a

Lesser Whistling Teal. But we feel the area has good potential for birds and could be made more attractive if better protection from disturbance could be offered.

This could be done by growing a live hedge of about 7ft. height around the pond commencing with the side facing the road. This would be the first step and should be followed by planting grass and sedges along the edges to attract water birds and also plant species like *Helicteres isora* (Murud Sheng) to attract birds. There are fig trees growing on the banks of the pond and other indigenous fruit bearing trees and shrubs could also be grown.

FAST ISSUES OF NEWSLETTER TO BE PRINTED. DR. J.C. UTTANGI, Retd. Principal, 56, Mission Compound, Dharwad 580 001

Magazines and Periodicals on 'Birds' are indeed limited. In my view it will be good if all the available previous 'Newsletter' issues since 1959 could be compiled and published in a book form and made available for reading by the army of Birdwatchers, and thereby improve their knowledge and standards.

I am sure with the cooperation of the co-workers the 'Newsletter' will very soon be popular and useful for Birders, Scientists as well as Naturalists. The periodical may also find much favour with every writer on Birds and Bird Photographers.

IMITATION BEHAVIOUR OF A HOUSE CROW. JUGAL KISHOR TIWARI, Dept. of Zoology, University of Jodhpur, Jodhpur 342 003

One morning in October 1987, at Keoladeo National Park, near Bharatpur, Rajasthan, around 08.00 hrs, I was sitting under a tree near the marshes watching the foraging behaviour of a Lesser Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*. The bird would fly 8-10 metres up, back and forth, pointing its bill downwards, and hover in mid-air with rapidly beating wings. Whenever a fish was sighted within a striking depth, the bird would plunge in the water to catch the fish. The Kingfisher would perch on a nearby overhanging bough to swallow the fish, and again start hovering over the water in search of other fishes.

From a distance a House Crow *Corvus splendens* was watching the hunting behaviour of the Kingfisher. After about five minutes when the Kingfisher moved away, the House Crow flew right in the manner of the Kingfisher. After 2-3 attempts of hovering over the surface, it pointed its head downwards, furled its wings and fell into the water like a stone. It got soaked in the water and could hardly fly. Luckily, the place where it tried to imitate the Kingfisher's hunting mode was near the bank which it managed to reach.

WHITE AND BLACKNECKED STORKS IN THE 1989 CENSUS. S. SRIDHAR, No. 51, 5th Temple Street, 15th cross, Malleswaram, Bangalore 560 003

We were glad to see three adult and one sub-adult White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* at Oragere Tank near Tumkur on Bangalore Pune Highway (NH4) on (19.11.89). We came across them on our way back to Bangalore from Sira along with Papanna, Karanth and Harvey after observing a pair of nesting Blackbacked Woodpeckers. This was our first encounter with White Storks for the year 1989. The sighting of the Storks recalled the painful experience of having witnessed the brutal slaying of a White Stork by two poachers during January 1988, near Tailur Tank. A report of this incident has already appeared in *Frontline*, May 27-June 9, 1989 along with the photograph of the White Stork being carried away by the poachers.

The censusing team operating from Bangalore during 1989 census covered 97 tanks, but could not come across even a single White Stork. However the report of Asian Waterfowl Census 1989 lists 218 White Storks from Karnataka (Page 35). This information needs closer examination as the number of White Storks covered in the entire country including Karnataka is 299 only. I am requesting the compilers Derek A Scott and Paul M Rose for the names of the sites in Karnataka where 218 White Storks were reported and also the names and addresses of counters reporting the same.

Further, in summary Table 2 giving species wise total for India, the following totals are given (Page 56) for White Stork and three other species of storks. But the figures given in Table 2 do not tally with the figures given in summary

Table 2 as seen from the extract of four species of storks.

The compilers also mention in page 30 that "the total count of Blacknecked Storks in India (120) was very low and gives some cause for concern, especially as this species is now almost extinct elsewhere in mainland Asia. The only other Blacknecked Storks recorded during the 1989 census were four in Srilanka."

But the extract shows that there are 855 Blacknecked Storks in India. Hence I am also requesting the compilers to clarify the findings.

EXTRACT OF TABLE 1 OF ASIAN WATERFOWL CENSUS 1989

Page No.	State	Black Stork	Woollynecked Stork	White Stork	Blacknecked Stork
31	Assam	7	2		
	Andhra		106	9	
	Delhi U.T.		2		
35	Gujarat	34	106	29	726
	Himachal	10			
	Karnataka			218	17
	Haryana		2	18	2
	Kerala				3
	J & K		2		
39	M. P.	5	10	1	3
	Maharashtra	8	25		5
	Rajasthan		8		15
	Orissa		8		
43	T.N.		22	11	76
	Tripura			11	
	U. P.	50	14	2	8
	Extract Total	114	307	299	855
56	Total given in Summary Table 2 of Report	114	462	782	120

Hints to Counters:

As in previous years, there are two separate forms: the Count Unit Form (green) and the Waterfowl Count Form (White).

If a Count Unit Form has already been completed for a particular site and sent to IWRB, this need not be done again. However, green forms should be completed for all new sites. Please check that the geographical coordinates are given correctly, as these will form the basis of the site code in the computer database. Sketch maps of the sites are particularly useful, and should show the boundaries of the area counted.

The census forms should be filled out as completely as possible and returned either to the relevant national or regional coordinator (if one exists) or directly to IWRB by the end of February at the latest.

The official dates for the 1990 Census are 4 to 21 January inclusive. This period includes three weekends to give as much time as possible to individuals who can only carry out counts on their days off from work. If sufficient manpower is available, the counts should be centered around the weekend of 13/14 January. As in previous years, we will continue to accept counts carried out in December and February, especially from poorly known areas, but these counts are much less useful for analysis purposes because they could include large numbers of birds counted elsewhere during January.

1. Please try to count all the waterfowl present
2. Try to give a figure for the number of individuals of each species present. Terms such as "hundreds" and "thousands" are not very helpful.
3. Try to avoid giving ranges, e.g. 100-200, and instead give that the figure which you consider most likely to be corrected.

4. If you fail to find any waterfowl at a wetland which is known to have held significant numbers of birds in the past, please complete a census form anyway, and note that no birds were present. If possible, give the reason for the absence of birds (e.g. wetland frozen over, wetland completely dry, or site much disturbed by hunters).

5. Try to visit all the sites that you visited last year, as well as a number of new sites. Obviously we want to extend our coverage to as many sites as possible, but the most useful information will come from regular counts at the same sites by the same observers.

6. Try to avoid duplication of effort. In 1989 as in previous years we often received two or more census forms for the same site. In some cases, two members of the same count team sent in forms independently; in some cases two teams visited the same site on the same day and sent in separate census forms; and in some cases counts were carried out on different dates by different observers. Whenever possible, counters should liaise with one another and produce a single census form which gives the results of their combined efforts.

7. Please double-check all your entries on the count forms. In particular, check to see that you have not inadvertently inserted a figure on the wrong line or confused species names.

8. Please write as clearly as possible, and be sure to give your full name and address on the Waterfowl Count Form. Otherwise we might not be able to send you a copy of the final report.

GOOD LUCK with the 1990 Mid-Winter Census

Derek A. Scott and Paul M. Rose



Please return this form to your National Coordinator
or IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BX, U.K.
before the end of March.

COUNTRY:

NAME OF SITE:

DATE OF COUNT:/...../199.....
day month year

PROVINCE/STATE/PREFECTURE:
NEAREST LARGE TOWN:

SITE CODE:

COVERAGE (partial, complete):

%

HAS THE SITE BEEN
COUNTED BEFORE?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Waterfowl Counts

GREBES

_____ Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
_____ Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*
_____ Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus*
_____ Black-necked Grebe *P. nigricollis*
_____ Unidentified grebes

PELICANS

_____ Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
_____ Spot-billed Pelican *P. philippensis*
_____ Dalmatian Pelican *P. crispus*
_____ Unidentified pelicans

CORMORANTS & DARTERS

_____ Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
_____ Indian Shag *P. fuscicollis*
_____ Little Cormorant *P. niger*
_____ Unidentified cormorants
_____ Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

HERONS & EGRETS

_____ Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*
_____ Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*
_____ Cinnamon Bittern *I. cinnamomeus*
_____ Black Bittern *I. ilavicollis*
_____ Malayan Night Heron (Tiger Bittern) *Gorsachius melanolephus*
_____ Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
_____ Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*
_____ Chinese Pond Heron *A. bacchus*
_____ Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
_____ Striated (Little Green) Heron *Butorides striatus*
_____ Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis*
_____ Little Egret *E. garzetta*
_____ Intermediate (Smaller) Egret *E. intermedia*
_____ Great Egret *E. alba*
_____ Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
_____ Grey Heron *A. cinerea*
_____ Goliath Heron *A. goliath*
_____ White-bellied Heron *A. imperialis (insignis)*
_____ Unidentified herons and egrets

STORKS

_____ Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*
_____ Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*
_____ Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*
_____ Woolly-necked (White-necked) Stork *C. episcopus*
_____ White Stork *C. ciconia*
_____ Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*
_____ Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*
_____ Greater Adjutant *L. dubius*
_____ Unidentified storks

IBISES & SPOONBILLS

_____ Black-headed (White) Ibis *Threskiornis (aethiopicus) melanocephalus*
_____ Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*
_____ Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
_____ White Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

FLAMINGOS

_____ Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*
_____ Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconalax minor*
_____ Unidentified flamingos

GEESE & DUCKS

_____ Fulvous (Large) Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*
_____ Lesser Whistling Duck (Lesser Tree Duck) *D. javanica*
_____ Greylag Goose *Anser anser*
_____ Bar-headed Goose *A. indicus*
_____ Unidentified geese
_____ Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*
_____ Common Shelduck *T. tadorna*
_____ White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata*
_____ Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*
_____ Indian Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus*
_____ Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
_____ Falcated Teal *A. falcata*
_____ Gadwall *A. strepera*
_____ Common (Green-winged) Teal *A. crecca*
_____ Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*
_____ Spot-billed Duck *A. poecilorhyncha*
_____ Northern Pintail *A. acuta*
_____ Garganey *A. querquedula*
_____ Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata*
_____ Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*
_____ Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
_____ Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
_____ Baer's Pochard *A. baeri*
_____ Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca*
_____ Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*
_____ Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*
_____ Goosander *Mergus merganser*
_____ White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*
_____ Unidentified ducks

CRANES

_____ Common Crane *Grus grus*
_____ Black-necked Crane *G. nigricollis*
_____ Sarus Crane *G. antigone*
_____ Siberian Crane *G. leucogeranus*
_____ Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*
_____ Unidentified cranes

RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS

_____ Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*
_____ Slaty-breasted Rail *R. striatus*
_____ Slaty-legged Crake *R. eurizonoides*

COMPILER'S name
and address:

Baillon's Crake *P. pusilla*
Ruddy Crake *P. fusca*
Brown Crake *Amaurornis akool*
White-breasted Waterhen *A. phoenicurus*
Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea*
Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
Common Coot *Fulica atra*

FINFOOT & JACANAS

Masked Fintoot *Heliopais personata*
Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus*

SHOREBIRDS - WADERS

Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*
Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*
Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*
Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*
Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*
Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*
Great Stone Plover *Esacus recurvirostris*
Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*
Little Pratincole *G. lactea*
Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
River Lapwing *V. duvaucelii*
Yellow-wattled Lapwing *V. malabaricus*
Sociable Plover *V. gregarius*
White-tailed Plover *V. leucurus*
Grey-headed Lapwing *V. cinereus*
Red-wattled Lapwing *V. indicus*
Asiatic (Pacific) Golden Plover *Pluvialis (dominica) fulva*
Grey Plover *P. squatarola*
Long-billed Plover *Charadrius placidus*
Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius*
Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*
Mongolian Plover *C. mongolus*
Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*
Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
Bar-tailed Godwit *L. lapponica*
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
Eurasian Curlew *N. arquata*
Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*
Redshank *T. totanus*
Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis*
Greenshank *T. nebularia*
Nordmann's Greenshank *T. guttifer*
Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus*
Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*
Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*
Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*
Solitary Snipe *Gallinago solitaria*

Pintail Snipe *G. stenura*
Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala*
Common Snipe *G. gallinago*
Jack Snipe *Lymnocyrtus minimus*
Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*
Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*
Sanderling *C. alba*
Little Stint *C. minuta*
Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii*
Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta*
Dunlin *C. alpina*
Curlew Sandpiper *C. fefruginea*
Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*
Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*
Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*
Unidentified shorebirds

GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*
Herring Gull *L. argentatus*
Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*
Great Black-headed Gull *L. ichthyaetus*
Brown-headed Gull *L. brunnicephalus*
Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*
Slender-billed Gull *L. genei*
Unidentified gulls
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*
White-winged Black Tern *C. leucoptera*
Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*
Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*
Indian River Tern *Sterna aurantia*
Common Tern *S. hirundo*
Black-bellied Tern *S. melanogaster*
Little Tern *S. albigrons*
Saunders' Little Tern *S. saundersii*
Great Crested Tern *S. bergii*
Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis*
Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*
Unidentified terns
Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis*

ADDITIONAL SPECIES

COMMENTS: (condition of wetland, disturbances, notes on unusual species etc.)



Please return this form to your National Coordinator or IWRB, Slimbridge,
Gloucester GL2 7BX, U.K. before the end of March.

COUNTRY:

NAME OF SITE:

PROVINCE / STATE / PREFECTURE:

NEAREST LARGE TOWN:

AREA:

COORDINATES:

N

E

SITE CODE:

WETLAND TYPE: (please circle the relevant figures)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 0 Open seas, bays, straits | 6 Reservoirs, barrages, tanks |
| 1 Estuaries, tidal mudflats, salt marshes | 7 Gravel pits, mineral workings |
| 2 Brackish or saline lakes, lagoons, salt pans | 8 Fish ponds, shrimp ponds |
| 3 Rivers, streams, canals | 9 Grassland, arable land |
| 4 Freshwater marshes, flooded areas | 10 Mangrove, nipah |
| 5 Freshwater lakes, ponds | 11 Freshwater swamp forest, peat swamp forest |

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

COMMENTS:

- season of maximum flooding;
- maximum depth of water;
- salinity/acidity;
- fluctuations/permanence;
- tidal variations

Outline map of count unit (limit of the area covered by the count) with important geographical features (cities, roads, rivers, hills). A copy of a map would be appreciated.

COMPILER'S name
and address:

ASIAN WATERFOWL CENSUS - A REPORT *Derek A Scott and Paul M Rose, compilers, International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7Bx, United Kingdom*

The first Asian Waterfowl Census was carried out in January 1987. Although this census was primarily concerned with the Indian Subcontinent, the neighboring countries of Burma and Thailand were invited to participate, and the results of the 1987 censuses in Hong Kong and Iran were included in the final report.

The success of the first Asian Waterfowl Census far exceeded the expectations of the organizers. About 200 individuals participated and almost 380 sites were counted. It was therefore decided that the counts should be expanded to include the whole of southern and eastern Asia. Nearly 1,000 copies of the 1987 report were sent out to possible contributors throughout the region, along with census forms for the 1988 count. The response was almost overwhelming. Seventeen countries participated; over 800 sites were visited and more than four million waterfowl were counted. It had now become clear that the Asian Waterfowl Census was not only an effective way of gathering valuable data on waterfowl populations in Asia, but was also an extremely popular exercise which could have a tremendous impact in raising public awareness to the problems facing wetlands and waterfowl in Asia. In effect, the Asian Waterfowl Census had become as much a conservation awareness campaign as a data-gathering exercise. By involving hundreds, and perhaps eventually thousands, of people in enjoyable field work, the Census would undoubtedly lead to an increased interest in wetlands and waterfowl throughout the region, and encourage individuals from all walks of life to take a greater interest in wetland conservation.

The objectives of the Asian Waterfowl Census may now be formulated as follows:

- to obtain information on waterfowl populations at wetlands in Asia during the midwinter period (January), as a basis for evaluation of sites and monitoring of populations;
- to encourage a greater interest in wetlands and waterfowl amongst governmental, non-governmental and private individuals, and thereby promote the conservation of wetlands in Asia.

By establishing an annual censusing procedure which can be continued indefinitely, it will be possible to monitor the fortunes of sites and species on a long-term basis. Although we are unlikely ever to achieve complete coverage of sites and species throughout the region, it should be possible to develop analytical procedures whereby populations of most species can be monitored effectively on the basis of counts at a sample of sites. In the short term, the counts can provide very valuable

information on the importance of particular sites and the distribution of species. They enable us to identify key sites for particular species, and provide us with a sound basis for monitoring at individual sites.

	No. of sites counted			No. of participants		
	1987	1988	1989	1987	1988	1989
South Asia						
Bangladesh	8	12	12	4	11	10
Bhutan	—	2	4	—	1	3
India	172	326	650	121	180	282
Nepal	12	10	2	18	8	15
Pakistan	67	147	190	18	17	18
Sri Lanka	67	101	109	15	17	29

Coverage in India

The 1989 census was the third mid-winter waterfowl census in India and much the most successful so far. From a rather modest start in 1987, when only 172 sites were visited, coverage increased to 326 sites in 1988 and then doubled to a massive 650 sites in 1989. The increasing popularity of the waterfowl censuses in India is reflected in the number of individuals taking part: 121 in 1987, 180 in 1988 and at least 282 in 1989. These are absolute minimum figures and represent only the number of individuals who entered their names on census forms. In a number of cases, the counts were carried out by an unspecified number of bird-watchers from a local Natural History Society or Bird Club.

As in the first two years, coverage in 1989 was best in the western and southern states. Some 170 sites were counted in Gujarat, 138 in Karnataka, 100 in Andhra Pradesh, 65 in Maharashtra, 62 in Tamil Nadu, 29 in Rajasthan and 23 in Kerala. Apart from two excellent series of counts from the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam (8 sites) and Tripura (7 sites), very little information was received from the eastern and north eastern states. There were only two counts in West Bengal, only one in Orissa, and none in Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. Some of the most important wintering areas for waterfowl in the Indian Subcontinent are to be found in the lower Gangetic Plain of Bihar and West Bengal, and along the shores of the Bay of Bengal in West Bengal and neighboring Orissa. Obviously, improved coverage of these important areas should be a high priority in future censuses. In all over 1,560,000 waterfowl of 142 species were recorded.

The 1989 census was again coordinated by S.A. Hussain of the Bombay natural History Society. By late July, he had received a total of 571 completed census forms from the network of counters. In addition, 187 census forms were sent directly to IWRB Headquarters. In many cases, these were duplicates of forms sent to S.A. Hussain. The two sets of data have been merged, and full sets are now available at both BNHS and IWRB.

LOJA – GARDEN OF ECUADOR

by Michael Keie Poulsen,
Hanne Bloch, Carsten Rahbek
and Jan Fischer Rasmussen

"The garden of Ecuador" was how Alexander von Humboldt referred to Loja, the province in southern Ecuador that borders Perú. The sad truth today is that the continuous virgin forests that inspired the sobriquet no longer exist: scattered woodlots are virtually all that remain. However, Loja is part of a major centre of endemism in South America: some 50 species of bird are restricted to southern Ecuador and the northernmost fringes of Perú. This prompted us to develop a project to study the distribution and dispersal of birds in some of the province's remaining fragments of forest, and we undertook fieldwork from January to July 1989.

This ICBP expedition represented a collaboration between Copenhagen University's Zoological Museum, the Danish Ornithological Society's Working Group for International Bird Preservation (DAFIF), the Corporación Ornitológica del Ecuador (CECIA) and Universidad Nacional de Loja (UNL). The expedition was made possible by a generous grant from Aage V. Jensens Fond. Nancy Hilgert de Benavides, director of CECIA and chairman of ICBP-Ecuador, was of invaluable help with permission, information and contacts; CECIA is a young organisation, but will certainly make a great impact in Ecuador in the future.

Fieldwork

We visited the six different mountain areas in Loja that reach above 2,500 m. This was not easy as the forests are often difficult to get to and situated on steep

slopes. Most of the time it rains or is very foggy, and nights can be rather cold: such conditions could well be the reason so little work has been conducted in Loja's mountains.

Having located all the forest left we then chose 10 forest tracts or patches for further investigation. Besides recording bird species and their densities, we also colour-ringed birds to investigate the capacities of different species to use secondary forest and to disperse across open terrain. Obviously the species that cannot do either are those most likely to be facing local or indeed total extinction.

The largest area of montane forest in Loja, and the one with greatest biological diversity, is thankfully already protected, at least on paper. The Podocarpus National Park extends over 146,000 ha, but remains poorly known in Ecuador and even in Loja. It is, nevertheless, extremely rich in bird species. Up to now only about a thousand hectares at 2,550–3,400 m in the Cajanuma Valley have been thoroughly surveyed, with 165 species recorded. But based on preliminary surveys at some other sites in the park, which ranges from 1,000 up to 3,700 m on both the western and eastern slopes of the Andes, we assume that it will prove to hold between 600 and 800 bird species. In Cajanuma we were still finding new species after 30 visits. Two of the species we saw there, Bay-vented Cottinga *Ampelion sclateri* and Yellow-scarfed Tanager *Iridosornis reinhardti*, are new to Ecuador.

Three threatened species

The Bearded Guan *Penelope barbata* is one of the species for which the temperate humid montane forests of Loja are of greatest international importance. Although reported in *Birds to watch* as very rare now in southern Ecuador (it only otherwise occurs in a few places in northern Perú), we recorded several pairs at three different localities, two of which were rather small isolated forest patches with much secondary growth. Everyone in Loja knows the pava because it is a big, noisy, strange-looking bird that tastes good. All the pavas at higher altitudes in the eastern part of Loja may prove to be Bearded Guans: in our six months fieldwork we never once saw the common Andean Guan *P. montagnii*, only Bearded.

The Golden-plumed Parakeet *Leptosittaca branickii* is a very poorly known species with disjunct populations in temperate cloud-forest and elfin woodland in Colombia, Ecuador and southern Perú. We recorded 10–20 at each of three different localities, though it may be that the Podocarpus National Park is the only protected area in the world sufficiently large to sustain a viable population.

The Red-faced Parrot *Hapalopsittaca pyrrhops*, which we regard as distinct

from the already threatened Rusty-faced Parrot *H. amazonina*, inhabits very humid temperate cloud-forest and elfin forest in Ecuador. We recorded it at two localities: in one, a rather small isolated forest in the Chilla Mountains, where Bearded Guan was also present, we saw a flock of 16 (we know of no recent reports of more than five together).



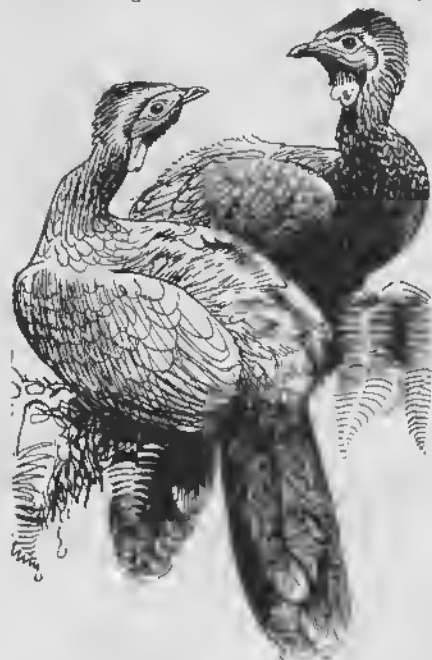
Forest clearance in the Chilla mountains.
(Photo: H. Bloch)

Local involvement

Dr David Espinosa of the UNL Veterinary Faculty was of enormous help in promoting our work in Ecuador, which ended with a three-day conference at UNL with 200–300 people attending and much media coverage. It was agreed that the university should take active part in the conservation of Podocarpus National Park and seek to create an educational institute for ecology and wildlife conservation.

Three local students helped with the fieldwork. None of them was particularly familiar with birds or conservation biology at the start, but over the six months they learnt a lot. On the last day they gave a talk at a public meeting (not the UNL conference) about bird conservation and the future of montane forest in their province. We noted a considerable rise in public interest in forest conservation over the period of our work.

Despite the increasing public awareness of and commitment to conservation in Ecuador, there is still a major lack of information, educational materials, and financial support. We hope to establish a long-term cooperative agreement between UNL and the Zoological Museum in Copenhagen, and aim to help carry out more surveys and develop education programmes in the area. The garden of Ecuador can still bloom for the entire world to enjoy.



Bearded Guans.
Drawing by J. Fjeldså.